

AN ORAL HISTORY OF WOMEN LEADERS OF MEMPHIS
INTERVIEW WITH PAT VANDER SCHAAF

BY - ELEANOR MCKAY
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MAY 31, 1979

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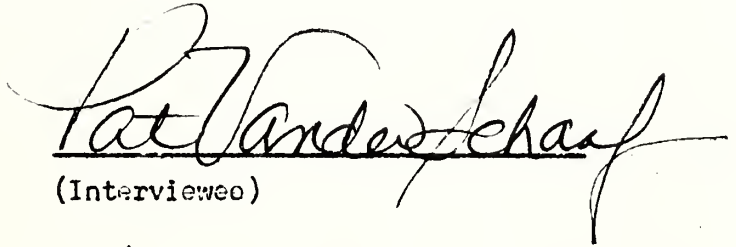
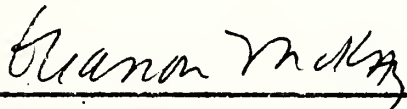
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PLACE

Memphis

DATE

31 May 79
(Interviewee)
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
of Memphis State University)



THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "WOMEN LEADERS OF MEMPHIS." THE PLACE IS MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE. THE DATE IS MAY 31, 1979, AND THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MRS. PAT VANDER SCHAAF. THE INTERVIEW IS BY ELEANOR McKAY, CURATOR OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY COLLECTION AT MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY.

McKAY: Say who you are, and what you're working on.

VANDER SCHAAF: Okay. I'm Pat Vander Schaaf.

McKAY: Good. You're on now.

VANDER SCHAAF: I was born in Trenton, New Jersey in 1943. I came from a military family. My maiden name was Patricia O'Neal. And, after arrival at Fort Dix, New Jersey, we then moved to Hawaii, and subsequently to Texas and California, Georgia, Maryland, Washington, D. C., the general routine that goes with military service of being around the country quite a bit. My father retired when we were in Atlanta, Georgia, on his last assignment, at Fort McPherson. He retired when I was going into my freshman year in high school. And we moved back to New Jersey, where part of the family was located. I went to schools up there, both in high school, and then, after completion of high school, went into Rutgers, graduated from there with an undergraduate degree in business, then took graduate courses, both at Rutgers University and Trenton State College, in Motivational Training and Mental Retardation, which is a far cry from business, but it was a field that there seemed to be some openings in and something that I was interested in. Upon graduation from college, I went to work for the Division of Mental Retardation



and was, luckily, handed the assignment of doing all the reevaluations of all the institutions for the retarded in New Jersey. At that time in our history, particularly with the emphasis in the Kennedy administration on mental retardation, that was a field that was finally being recognized as something not to be put away in the shadows somewhere. And I really thoroughly enjoyed the time that I had . . . was able to spend with them. Clair is my husband---we married, went to school, college, together. After about a little less than a year in New Jersey he was with C.F. & I Steel Corporation, he received an offer to come and handle the southern territory. The only reason that we chose Memphis at that point in time was that the man who had been the southern regional representative before left the car and the equipment and everything else in Memphis. He had been located here. We really could have gone to anywhere from Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee. There were no predetermined particular points of location that we had to reside in.

And we moved to Memphis in 1966. Neither Clair nor I knew a soul in this city. We arrived with our cat and our belongings and settled in. Originally we lived in an apartment on Stonewall, in the midtown area, and then (interruption)

Upon arrival, the first thing I started to do was, of course, try and get back in the field I'd become very interested in, which was mental retardation. And found that Tennessee was so far behind the eastern part of the United States with emphasis on that field, of retardation. The only thing that was occurring here at the time was the beginning of the construction of the Arlington Developmental Center. Other than that, there were very, very few services available. And I was all of a sudden faced with a



dilemma of, okay, now that I've found a field that I was really interested in, what do I do now? And started going to Employment Security, and all the different interviews, and looking for jobs. Clair was covering a territory, so he was out meeting people all the time that were directly related to business. And I was in the apartment, or just walking along the streets, trying to strike up a conversation (laughing). I was saying, you know, what is this city really like? And, finally, after about three or four months, I went to see some people and they talked about this brand new agency that was just beginning to get into operation. It did have some social services, component social service division in it, which was at that time the old War on Poverty program, which today is known as the Community Action Agency. And I was lucky in securing a job there. I went in as the Director of Human Services. At that time, Washington Butler was the then Executive Director. Stayed there for a little over four years. It was a fantastic experience in a number of different ways because of being directly involved in a social service end. I really was able to see the many different parts of the city that you just would not have the availability to really get into in another type of job situation. Went into every so-called ghetto area that we have in the city, and at the same time, was working with people that were in the Chamber of Commerce, people that were in other related business activities, trying to get, to develop job opportunities and programs. So, as a result of that one experience, I really felt like I saw the complete Memphis, because it was dealing both with those people who had "made it," those individuals that represented the business structure, and then also, at the same time, dealing on a daily basis with all those individuals who were trapped in the welfare cycle. There's just such a differ-

ence in different parts of our city. If you go to south Memphis, north Memphis, east Memphis, they really have totally different characters, and particularly the economic differences are extreme.

With that, after the agency at that time was going through just a social conscious-type awareness, both at the local political level, which was very hostile at the time, and then also nationally, they were running into a number of different problems with it. Four years, I felt that I was really able to accomplish everything that I had wanted to do, and at the same time, was getting into a degree of complacency. And I really felt that I did not want to just be somebody who was just going to stay there and do the same good old thing. And an agency like the War on Poverty, I'm convinced that those agencies need to have new blood coming in all the time, because with new, young people, you tend to get new, innovative ideas. As we become too much part of the system, we do not tend to take the risks that we do when we first start something in a new venture.

So I left there, and went to work for Memphis Regional Medical Program, which was a five-state regional planning program to try and do something about combating heart disease, cancer, and stroke. I still maintained very close ties with the people connected with the War on Poverty program because I'm still convinced today that the basic human problems are so tangled up. It's not just a problem of economics. It very often then becomes a problem of health, and you can't separate one entity of social service from another. In staying in close ties with that, we were able to broaden Regional Medical Program's scope of services. Worked very diligently with the U.T. hospital complex in establishing the first regional sickle cell center, which is, as you know, a disease that affects black



people, and can have devastating effects of, again, the financial aspect of it, because of the problems that are related to that particular disease. We also got into a number of other things---hemophilia. We were able to move the agency into other catastrophic illnesses apart from heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

Now, it was at that point that I really became involved in the political system. Up to that particular point in time, I mean, the entire time spent with War on Poverty program I was really dealing in social service delivery. My husband, at the same time, when he was not traveling, he became very involved with the Young Republicans here, and became the president of two of the groups, the North Shelby group and the Midtown group. And that was his outlet. That was his way of meeting people. I was moving in the social service stream and meeting all sorts of new interesting people that made up Memphis. And he had found his own direction which was in the political entity. I would sort of tag along in order to see him on the weekend and go to some of the political gatherings.

And it was when I was at Regional Medical Program we started to do health legislation on a hemophilia program, that I realized how inter-related the political structure is with every single thing we do. You just can't divide it. It controls zoning; it controls deliberation of what particular health problems are going to be prioritized; it predetermines through its budget process at the state level or local level in particular what emphasis is going to occur, during a particular point in time. And we did, the hemophilia legislation had to be taken through the Nashville process because we had to have special legislation enacted. And we were also doing a kidney disease bill at the same time. And that was the first



time I'd really come face to face with how a bill works, and what you have to do, and how you have to educate the very lawmakers who you tend to think should know. And they're not going to know unless somebody takes the time to really sit down and explain to them, very carefully, why your project is really better than the other forty thousand projects that are being lobbied for at the same time. And once I was involved in that, I became even more active within the Republican Party, along with Clair. And wanted to learn more and more about how it worked---how do you not only get bills passed, but how do you also get areas of the city budget-predetermined as to what emphasis is going to take place in housing codes, or building, or growth-planning, or just a number of other subjects.

And, again, during the time that I was with Regional Medical Program, Clair ran, the first time, for the at-large position on the County Court. And there were, I think, a field of thirteen or fourteen people at that time, and he came in third. And we learned an awful lot about campaigning, which we'd never really been involved in, apart from helping other people and just general campaign activities. But found that, it's like trying to sell Coca-Cola in a brand new market. You have to work very hard, and, again, you've got to get your message out to thousands and thousands of people who don't necessarily really care about the political process, who may be going to vote, but they're just going to vote because they feel it's their duty many times. But they really are not going to know anything about you unless you've been to their door, or come over the electronic media or some way to tell them what it is that you want to do differently, and why they should even consider you, to cast a ballot for you. Clair did not win that race. Then about, it was within a year's time, Louis Taliaferro,



at that time was a County Commissioner---a County Court Squire . . .

McKAY: Can you date that?

VANDER SCHAAF: I'm trying to think what the date of that would have been. '74, it would have been, I think, '73.

McKAY: That Clair ran?

VANDER SCHAAF: Uh-huh. And, then, within that very time frame, again, around '73, Louis Taliaferro, who was a County Squire, committed suicide. And there was a vacancy on the Court. And there was an awful lot of scrambling. Clair just had come out of a race, but felt that there had been a lot of name identification established. I really was dying to run. I mean, I was just "chomping at the bit." Because there were so many new things that I felt that I just wanted to be able to say. All these ideas that were popping into my head at the time. I said, "I'll go ahead, and I'll run." There were about thirteen or fourteen of us that were interested. We got together over a number of different meetings together. And narrowed the field down, and, one by one by one, people for one reason or another, decided that they did not want to run. And I wound up running in that campaign, and losing, but learning from it more and more about how the whole political structure works and the mistakes that you can make in a campaign, how one has to be structured and some of the best ways to really get the message out to people where they are.

McKAY: What are some of the things that you feel like you learned from that?

VANDER SCHAAF: From my campaigns?



McKAY: Yeah.

VANDER SCHAAF: That structure is one of the most important things. Manpower . . . you can exist, working as an individual on a number of different organizations and doing a lot of volunteer work or even in your professional life, meeting people. And you think that you've got a lot of good ideas. But you've got to be able to convince your closest friend why should they be willing to give up their time for four or five months to work going door to door for you? Because you think you've got some new ideas in the political structure.

The money was another factor. There have been many fine people who have run for public office that never made it. And they didn't many times because they did not concentrate on raising the money early enough to be able to buy all the materials that you have to purchase, to be able to put money aside for radio time, or whatever the component parts are going to be of the campaign.

And communication with individuals . . . One thing I did learn is through both campaigns, that you can't continue to grasp at the things that are not reality, that it's great to say all these super-marvelous things that are so typically political. But folks are tired of hearing that stuff, you know, they want you to be able to come down to maybe two or three different things, you know, exactly what are you going to do? There's such a distrust right now, and has been for the last, I'd even say ten years, of the political system, that all candidates sound alike. And I tell you what---when you're on that campaign field, all candidates do tend to sound alike. Just the same old thing: we're going to stop taxes; we're going to bring your utility rates down; we're going to . . . You know, as a

candidate, I promise that I will watch those dollars carefully, that I will make sure at some point that the welfare program is not being ripped off. Those are the general political "outs" that are used by just about every single candidate. Very few people are willing to take innovative stands at all as to what they're going to do, or to come face to face with the realities. Nobody wants to hear that the utility rates are going to go up, or to hear that utility rates are going to continue to go up. They'd rather hear, the political person thinks, that we can give you the assurance that you'll be paying rates like you were two or three years ago, and we can guarantee that, because there's a big situation that exists between federal government and the local government, a big conspiracy. The political system---people that run, that's the political system, so often---do not do a service to the people through the campaigns, because they are not being forthright and honest. They're saying all the things they think that people want to hear because the most immediate thing for them is to get elected. That is their prime goal-to get elected. And once you tend to get into that political cycle, the rationalization that's used so often is that, "Well, I'll go ahead and say this. I don't want to put my own beliefs out too much on the table because if I do, my opponent will use that against me. And if they do that, then I won't win, and of what good will I be to the people that I want to help?" And the whole rationalization is crazy.

How to raise money was a key factor of the political process. The communication, how to organize volunteers, and give them something worthwhile to do so that they can see some part of the system, not just having to do "busy work." But that you structure it very carefully, that each person that's doing something has not only learned something about it, but

is also feeling good about the campaign and will be willing, of course, to hopefully do more. And if you feel good, then, therefore hopefully will give some more of your own time.

And the final part was coming to, which I feel, and still feel today, that people would rather hear the truth now, as unpleasant as it might be, but as long as it can be, it's factual and supported, uh, folks don't want to hear all the fairy tales any more. They've heard all that too many times. They've heard for too many years about the gasoline prices and utility prices and the cost of living and the economic scale going up, and stuff like that. They believed it for a while, but you're a fool if you think that they're believing it now. When we go to the grocery store, we can see that the rate of inflation is going up. When we pay house notes or anything else---that those days are gone, and they're got going to come back. And to continue to try and psyche people into this attitude that, "Oh, everything's going to be okay, and I'm going to take care of your future," is not the way I think politics ought to be. Four years ago when I ran, the campaign was concentrated even then on utilities. And what I did throughout the entire thing was to zero in constantly on, not what's going to happen; you know, it's not going to be like this, but, what you've got to do is to prepare for the future. And our responsibility, as people that are in government, is to try and get the most accurate information that we can possibly get our hands on, and then give you some kind of warning that within the next two years . . . oops (interruption)

McKAY:

Okay, you ran and you said you learned about things and then I asked you some of the things you learned.



VANDER SCHAAF:

Okay. Uh . . . covering the County Court race
that was created by the vacancy of Louis

Taliaferro, I ran in that race and lost, which was, I believe, 1973-'74, I need to get those dates straight. Okay, then, shortly after that, again, about six months later Gwen Awsumb, who was the only female member of the City Council, who served an at-large position, decided to resign from office and accept the position of director of the Community Development Program. And, with that occurring, it left open her vacancy, which was decided by the members of the Council. They had to go into a public vote session. And I was one of, I'm trying to think of the number there were, fourteen or fifteen of us, who were vying for that vacancy. I'm sure we absolutely almost drove almost every Council member to the point of insanity, because the lobbying that went on for that position was incredible. They said afterwards, you know, that when something like that occurs, you can't make anybody happy, and particularly when you have that number of people. That was not one of the most . . . thing that the political individuals were relishing at all. You had to have seven votes, which is the magic number for anything to pass by the Council. And, again, I really felt, I know I use the word "lucky," but I think that so much of it has occurred for a number of different reasons, and luck was a big part of it. And particularly when, talking to some of the Council members later, how they narrowed down the choices, and so forth, I got the exact number of votes on the fourth or fifth round, which was seven votes. It was April 1, 1975, when I went on the Council that it actually occurred. Served the duration of Gwen's term, which was a matter of a few months, and then had to run for public office, a citywide race, along with all other members

who were up for re-election at that time. I inherited all of her assignments, and one of which I don't think I would have chosen if I'd had the opportunity because it was a field that I really didn't know that much about, was the chairman of the Utility Committee, but in retrospect, was one of the best things that happened to me on the Council because it really made me concentrate on something that was foreign. Oh, this is getting incredible this morning! (Children's talk)---this is like this around here all the time. Okay (Where were we?)

McKAY: You had inherited Gwen's responsibilities,
including chair of utilities.

VANDER SCHAAF: Okay. The Utility Committee . . . what the
link actually is, that whoever chairs it,
serves as the liaison from the city to the Memphis Light, Gas, and Water.
And it was just beginning in the whole utility area the emphasis of rising
costs, loss of potential natural gas, of changes in the development policy,
of freezes that were going to be occurring by the natural gas companies
and the whole legislative uproar that was occurring nationally on the gas
act policy, a national piece of legislation. And then we went into energy
resource recovery, about using garbage to then turn into an energy product,
you know. It just seemed like from month to month there was one big, brand
new, strange, technical thing that was coming up that the Council had to be
aware of, and I did too. We had two major bond refinancings that came up
under special loophole provision.

And I felt that the one thing that I had done very early which has
proved to be the best time I ever spent, was majoring in business in college,
because of having a background, a fairly strong background, in business, of

just the accounting techniques and the understanding of money and flow of dollars and so forth, that saved me in so many different ways because everything that was occurring related to numbers, and once I could get that part of it established---had that basis---then I could start learning the technical information that I did not have as a background. But if I'd had to do both at the same time, I just feel like it would have been almost impossible to have been able to maintain that committee assignment. The division happens to have, at present, an outstanding Board, volunteer Board, of Commissioners, who also have put in probably more time than anyone else in the history of L. G. & W. Board of Commissioners have ever spent, because of all these new changes that have occurred. Purchased a gas well. We've done two new major refinances. Just the uh special legislation. We were the first in the country to establish that in order to get into Louisiana and purchase the field. And it's proven to be a very innovative organization.

That one committee took up most of the time, and then, of course, inheriting any other ones, which were just traditional, regular, routine committee assignments. I have, I felt, in a way, that some of the areas a few of the areas that I really wanted to concentrate on---which were growth and planning, just pure city growth and planning, and then also, concentration of totally reevaluating human service system, so that we just didn't have the same agencies continuing on and on out of city funds---got lost for me because of the emphasis on utilities that first two years. And I'm now at a point, feeling that I have done all the necessary homework and I've tried to become very familiar with the field, that I can now get back into the two areas that I really felt, originally, very strongly about

even though now I still have, now, have picked up another one, which is the total utility area.

Let me back up to one point, too. During the course of, before I actually ran for public office and so forth, we have a son who is now eight years old, Trey Vander Schaff. He is our only child, and has also been very, very involved with us. He's worked every political campaign and is probably one of our best little campaign workers that goes out.

The change in the political structure . . . there were many, the . . . Let me touch on an area, just for a minute, that is something that . . . (I cannot concentrate. This is crazy. We should have done this in a closed room somewhere.)

McKAY: Do you want me to come back, where we could meet somewhere else? I was so late, that's the problem.

VANDER SCHAAF: Oh, no. That's okay, I'm just trying to think. I feel so disjointed, with this whole . . . you know, it just doesn't feel like it's moving in any kind of solid direction at all. Let me pick up from the female standpoint and then see how it goes.

McKAY: How do you spell Trey?

VANDER SCHAAF: T-r-e-y.

McKAY: Okay.

VANDER SCHAAF: Let me touch on, on one thing that is really different as a female in politics. And I'm going to use myself, my personal feelings, and then also, feelings and expressions and discussions that I've had with my husband, who is also elected to public office. He's a County Court Commissioner.

When I first got on the Council, for a fairly long period of time, say the first year or so that I was on there, I had always been used, as an individual before, coming from a very strong-willed family, that we were always encouraged to do whatever it was that we wanted to do, you know, to say whatever it was that we wanted to say, not to camouflage feelings, et cetera, and that it was best not to waste time, to get down to the point and confront other people if you had a problem or discuss new projects, et cetera. And I'd really been, in retrospect, exceptionally lucky in the jobs that I'd had, because I worked for people who also felt similarly; you know, that your time was not to be spent, you know, just making do, but that you just moved out in directions. If you wanted to do something different, you could go ahead and do it. I had that experience at the War on Poverty program when I was with Washington Butler as my immediate supervisor, and then also at Regional Medical with Dr. Culbertson as my immediate supervisor. And I've always had---the jobs that I was in---the freedom to really be able to just go into new areas and "do your thing," whatever, but to feel good about your job.

The thing I found that was so totally different in the political structure is that there is such an incredible amount of "turf protection" going on at all times. People are intimidated, very, very intimidated about their territory. Or anything new and different. I think more so in politics than any other field that I can think of. Because you're entering almost as a threat. You're an unknown. They don't know where you're going to come from; they don't know how much they can talk to you about anything, because they don't know whether you're going to hit a press conference right away, or what you're going to do. So there's an awful lot of guarded feelings that

exist in the political structure. There are, from a female standpoint, the things that I found right off the bat, was that I was "there." So it wasn't a question that I would go away tomorrow, I was entrenched in a position. And the way that everybody continued to talk to me, for the first period of time that I was in office, was that, every time I cast a vote--and when I went in, I took some pretty controversial votes, and just said what I was going to do, I was just going to be this say (laughing); no playing games as far as what was popular politically, et cetera---and was reminded, over and over again, "Well, Mrs. Awsumb wouldn't have done it that way. Why are you doing it this way?" And I said, "You know, you're taking an awful lot for granted," when I'd talk to people, "because how could you predetermine what Gwen Awsumb was going to do? She's very much of an individual; she's very strong." And, you know, to use that kind of an argument on one to one, just seemed to me almost insane. But the other part of it, that I finally burst out with one morning at the executive session, after that remark had been made for the forty-second time, was that, "Hey, folks, no one is asking Mike Cody, or saying to him, 'Jack McNeil would have done it this way, or he would have voted this way, so why aren't you doing that?' or 'Bob Love would have voted this way, so, Pat Halloran, why aren't you voting this way?'" Why me? Why is it that I'm being constantly put in that position of my predecessor would have done such and such, so I should do such and such. You know, we are all different, just like all the men are different, and accept the fact that male politicians are totally different. It's about time to accept the fact that all female politicians are also very different, that we're not, none of us are out of the same mold." And what I found is that, and you know, I've reconfirmed this with some members of the Council, be-



cause at first it was just feelings more than anything else, is that, as a male person entering the system, there is a degree of almost instant acceptance. With a female coming in, there is a long period of guarded acceptance, of not quite knowing what to do. You've got to prove yourself over and over and over again. I mean, I must have had to make fourteen tough votes before I finally became accepted as part of the pack. I mean, I'm just using that figure hypothetically, but, it's so apparent and I had conversations with Council members later. And we'd get into this. Things are changing so much; it is new for women to be involved. One thing that they had said, several of them said to me, and I had talked to Gwen at one point about, was the fact that, they had an easier time accepting and being part of the original City Council with Gwen because she was older than I am. She had white hair. She was a person that they could identify with so much more readily than someone younger that they felt like was a daughter figure rather than contemporary. And it was very interesting. It was a very frustrating time for me that first year and a half because I never knew who was going to come from where. And Clair and I talked about it later. He saw parts of it, of the questioning, and there were just sentences or words that would be used that were not intentional put-downs, but they were. It was just something where you were being questioned, and you knew you weren't being questioned because of your being able to handle that particular situation from an intellectual level. You were being questioned because of you as a female. "Will you change? Now we know that women change their minds very often, so therefore, are we absolutely guaranteed that you're going to stay in this position or will you change your mind?" It was those kinds of things over and over again that just kind of made it very, very tough for me to deal with

because I had never, never had that in my life before. I've never felt like anyone had to question what I was going to do. If I had questions about a subject I always let them know ahead of time. And I never told them what I was going to do unless I was absolutely secure and sure that that was the area I was going to move into. So, it was a very tough time to understand all that was happening.

And then, a year and a half after I was elected--a year after I was elected---Clair then ran for the vacancy that had been created by Shelby County Court Squire William Farris. And he won that election and became a County Court Squire, so there were all of a sudden two Vander Schaffs in local politics, one on one side of the street, and one on the other. And then Clair became acutely aware of a lot of the differences that went on. And I'll give you just some general examples, because they're things that particularly, women that have been involved in the political structure can appreciate. And once you mention, sometimes, people can see it occurring time and time again. Clair, before, would be questioned if we were out at receptions, et cetera, by people if it was a particular case coming up before the Council, men that he knew---men that we both knew, in fact, that we both had dealings with, with our own business---would say, would come up and say, "Clair, will you talk to Pat about such and such and such and such?" And he'd say, "Why don't you want to talk to her? [You go to---]" They just didn't know---again, it was a question---they were used to women in business. They're used to---and they are today--they're used to seeing females come up through the business structure. But they're not quite sure how to deal with a female in politics. There's just something that, through perception, is seen as different. And then, after Clair got on the Court,

the same thing was occurring even more so because he was now an elected official. They'd feel like they could come lobby him, and then therefore, I was to get my marching instructions from him. And, fortunately, because Clair and I had many, many discussions about this subject, and we had identified so many little code words and so many different isolated examples of how things happened, he consistently said, "If you want to talk, you've dealt with me. You're finished with the County Court. If you want to talk about something that's related to the City, you'd better just go ahead and do it because I'll never say a word about it." And it took that kind of stuff. And again once the ice was broken and start dealing with these people, later many of them would say, very surprisingly, "We were very nervous about this. We didn't know what was going to happen." They weren't nervous at all about dealing with, again, with the male members of the Council. But there was just something foreign about dealing with the political realities of zoning, cases of the political realities of major changes that occur in ordinances and so forth. And it's been fascinating. It has been constantly trying to work through that. And also trying to constantly keep your sense of humor about the whole situation. If you lost that, you really have gone down for the third time. You have to, I believe, personally, just keep in mind that people are going through so many tremendous changes of lifestyles and everything else. And I understand, I think, what's happening. I don't like it, but I'm not going to be able to change it. The only thing I'm going to be able to do is just to work that much harder at making sure that I'm accessible and available, and don't do the traditional, you know, perceived female-type things. I mean, I'd never cry in any one of them because that, again, those are the typical kinds of

things that are said so often, "when the pressure gets tough, they just break down," these kind of quotes. And you could get into a whole discussion, which I have had with the other members, the other female members, who were elected to the state legislative body and Quarterly Court that have had similar kinds of experiences. I am as, I guess, enthusiastic and excited, generally, about the political system today, even having been in it now, in an elected position, for over four and a half years, as I was the first day I started, because there is just so much happening all the time here. There isn't a day that I run into that I don't learn something in the city government on how it functions. It changes all the time. You can see endless ways in which changes can occur for the better. The frustrating part comes in, in that you don't have the time. You just, physically, don't have the kind of time that it would take to make all the necessary changes.

And also having to recognize, which is the frustrating part, is that there is no one person in charge. No one person can make those changes. In a company---we have our own business, which is Vander Schaff and Associates; we do home building and then have prestressed concrete supply business. Every company that we deal with, there is somebody in charge. That person at the head will make a decision, and that information will flow on back down to the rest of the people, and a new project will start. We'll take a new bid on a particular bridge project, whatever. In the political process, in the city process, we have thirteen elected members of the Council that are legislators, one mayor who is administrative head of the city government. You've got fourteen people. You try and get fourteen political entities to decide on one direction, and whoever comes up with that

will have mastered the whole art of political movement in a positive direction. Each one of us identifies what our pet priorities are going to be. And everybody's scrapping for their own territory. The mayor is charged with actually hiring all the personnel to implement the legislative priorities. And once it's set in motion at the beginning of the year, that's it. It's pretty well locked in. And the time frame is what you become so acutely aware of; you just don't have the time blocks available to you to sit down in a closed group and say, "Okay, this is what we want to do. We want to do these five major things this year." Now we do the construction that way. We've done Volunteer Park, Libertyland, Coliseum, all major pieces of construction work are done in that kind of way, and there's no problem there. But when you get into the nebulous economic development, planned growth of the community, the things that are so intangible, but yet you know need to be taken off in some direction, those things get lost in discussion groups. Every piece of it gets sent into the committee process. And the committee process can drive you up the wall, because it takes so long for it to come back in the legislative process. That part I find very frustrating, and I have, again, just have not finally come to grips, and never will come to grips with the fact that, that's the way it's got to be, but I recognize that that's the way it is now.

McKay: Do you think a city manager would improve it?

VANDER SCHAAF: Still, you'd have the same, even with the city manager, and I've gone to several cities to take a look at the manager-council form of government. Again you have your individual political entities, which would be your Council members, thirteen, that are still going to set the direction. They employ a city manager to

carry out their legislative objectives. But until we can, let's again, dealing with people, until we can stop having our days and months determined by crises all the time, and find some time to really sit down with all the different segments of this community and decide in what direction we ought to be moving, we're going to be behind growth in this particular city.

Memphis, as I said earlier, having grown up all over the country, still we chose to, actually chose to live here five years ago. At that time, five years ago, Clair left C.F. & I. Steel Corporation and we created our own company here. We talked long and hard about whether a move to another area might be beneficial, because we virtually do no business in Tennessee, because we don't want to have the problems conflicting of politics and our business or have any big customers say, "Now I got a zoning case coming up and I want you to do such and such." So we tried to remove those kinds of barriers and after a lot of discussion, decided that we both thoroughly love being here in Memphis. We've made friends that I would miss terribly if, you know, if we were away from, that Memphis has got everything that we could want in a city. It's just the lifestyle, et cetera. It's very conducive to our particular way of living in it. And the potential's here--- long term economic potential is here if we chose to ever get out of politics and do more business actually within the state of Tennessee. This city, regardless of the political situations that exist right now, and the barriers, regardless of the general attitude of its citizens that we're not going to go anywhere, it's going to move. We're going to move in spite of our negative attitude about our own city.

I took on, when I became chairman of the City Council in . . . actu-

ally took over January 2, 1979, the main thing I wanted to do during this term was to work with the business leaders, the social service leaders, the people in the field of education, the people that deal with small businesses, et cetera, and to come up collectively with some kind of a format of just succinct information about our city, to see if we couldn't collectively work on changing our own image. And it's seen some, there will be some new programs coming up very shortly. I have been amazed at so many new ideas, some that other people have been talking about for a long time. I think that we just generally, we're beginning to recognize, almost at the same point in time, that we can move faster if we want to. But we've got to be able to feel good enough and positive enough about ourselves, that when people come in to look at us, as visitors, as potential industries, et cetera, that we're not always saying to them the traditional Memphian questions: "What is it that brought you here? Why would you want to come to Memphis?" That's what they hear. That's what visitors into the city of Memphis hear from our very residents over and over and over again. It's kind of like you've got to establish the power of positive thinking, and sell this city. I mean, even New Yorkers, with all the problems they have, are still, you get on the airplanes and they're wearing big buttons: "I'm from Brooklyn and proud of it" or "I'm from Yonkers" or wherever, or "I love New York", and they've got problems that the city of Memphis, fortunately, will hopefully never ever have to come to face with, with the economic problems. But here, where we have one of the lowest unemployment rates regardless of, you know, when you take the national set of statistics; when you look at our energy rates, that we pay one of the lowest rates in the nation, even though it's not as low as people would like for it to be. We have so many good, many, many



good, fine factors about the cost of living, et cetera, I could go on and on, but there are so many positive things that need to be said over and over and over again before we bring in, "Well, did you know our bussing is killing our school system?" or all the negative kinds of things that just kind of scare people. Across the country, the same thing is going on, so it's not just unique to Memphis. People, we here in the city, just don't tend to toot our own horn enough and tell people what it is that we have or how good it is. And that whole program is just blending together beautifully. We've been able to get the Ad Federation, which is the whole group of the complete advertising companies in the city of Memphis, to agree to take this project on gratis for the city, and they are now working with many, many different groups and we're going to try and sort of duplicate what Detroit did with its whole Renaissance program. And it's going to take some time. It's not an overnight thing. It's not going to occur in one year. The underlying thing that I said to all the people that I got together in the presentation before the president of the Ad Federation, was that I did not want to be involved in an up-front position. All I wanted to do was be able to use the office of the chairman as the pulling together point, and then let the people that are not connected with politics take it and run with it. And we would work with them; we would be behind them in every way we can. But if we have people in politics out there in front, it's going to be questioned on the front end: "What are they trying to do? Make a new name for themselves?" or all of a sudden every politician in town will be trying to head one of the Task Force committees and they'll get so wrapped up in themselves that they won't really be able to keep the groups going. So I'm really excited about that. I think it's got incredible

potential to do it. And the time is right.

Something is occurring, something, again, that is intangible, but we're beginning to get many new industries coming into our city to take a look at it. And it's something that we've had no control over. It's because they can't afford the prices of energy, et cetera, that the East Coast and the West Coast have right now. Because our cost of living is lower and will remain lower because of being in the TVA system, the accessibility of the lumber, the cotton supply, there are a number of factors that are predetermined factors that surround us right now, that make it. People are zeroing in, that Memphis is the next big growth area, this whole territory. And we're crazy if we don't take advantage of it.

And at the same time, that's what I want to get into next year, back to the growth plan to control growth, don't want it to be topsy-turvy, just trying to get development, for quick development, in trying to get industry. I think we can afford to be very, very selective about who it is that we want to come in and finally settle in Memphis. I'm not, as an individual, not interested in five thousand new jobs unless they're paying better than average wages, because I think we can afford to be selective. But we, again, have got to have that planned out, or we'll do what our pattern has been for so long, is to simply say, "My God, somebody's coming, you know. Come on in," and we'll do everything legislatively to help them. And I don't want to see, I just don't want to see us do that, because I think we could really hurt some areas of the city if we're not very, very careful on how that planned growth will eventually occur over a ten to fifteen year period.

Clair was recently re-elected to the County. The Shelby County govern-



ment changed its form of government last year from the court squires system into the county commissioners system under new legislative act, and he was elected last summer to a four-year term. I'll be running for re-election this coming October.

One thing I was very, very proud of, is the fact that, when I ran the last time, four years ago, that there was a lot of discussion about, you know, a female making it---all the women that ran, ran against me! I mean, every female that wanted to run, ran in that Position One at-large seat. I think we've learned something since then because there are now women that are applying right now for other seats. And it was a race made tougher because of that, because I was having to fight the female-to-female to Position One at-large thing, and then also try and run a campaign that divorced itself from that issue. But when the final vote count was in, I established the highest number of votes that anyone has ever gotten in an election in Shelby County, even though it was only, even though it was a citywide race. Received 4,000 more votes than the major did. And it just tickled me because it was the first thing the press picked up the next day, was that, after all the discussion and controversy and stuff like that, and still hold the record so far. No one else has been able up to this point ---has beaten it. And the thing it proved to me was that that old stereotype was no longer there, that people were not going into the voting booth and voting only for males, because there was a male in my---when we did the run-off thing too---that that is not the obstacle any longer, that a female or a male, right now, equally have access into the political structure. And that's been now proven since we've---all right, Carloyn Gates was elected as a County Commissioner in that election that was held two years ago.

Minerva, of course, was on there. The record's set. There had been a time of pioneering when very few of them were involved going into those races. But that doesn't seem to be the case any longer, which I'm delighted about. It's just a question, that you've got to be able to get out there as an individual, period, and get your message across. And I, if anybody says any longer that they didn't make it because they were male or female, I'm not willing to buy it, based on what I've been seeing across the country and our own voting records that have been established here the last three or four years. I'm delighted about that. That barrier's been crossed.

McKAY: Do you want to make any kind of concluding statement to what you've just said. (inaudible)

Or when you were talking about differences that you and Clair found between yourselves as a male and female candidate? You covered a few, but did you want to go back? You said there was a guarded atmosphere politically, and that people expected you to vote just like Gwen, didn't realize you were different.

VANDER SCHAAF: Yeah.

McKAY: That a woman could be different, That they felt threatened by you because of your age and I assume your attractiveness.

VANDER SCHAAF: They . . . I'm trying to think what else. Are there any areas that are . . . oh, I was . . . I don't know how appropriate . . . I was going to just cover some of the things that are not known--well, they are known, they've been out in the political digest, but things . . . I have suffered, since I was in college,



with---as you know, that's why I was in the hospital back and forth last week---with arthritis. And, I don't know how to blend it in here, but it's something I get questioned about an awful lot, that ties, when I go to talk to people as a volunteer, in this case, that physical limitations, et cetera, do not prevent you from being a participant either in social service or in a political arena. That, and that was one thing that had come up last year. Well, it's been used by an opponent that I had had at one time, was that, "She's not in very good health," and had it out in the political circles that I was dying twice. But it's something that you have to, I don't really know how to, it has been tied into my political career, but it's something that . . . a couple of times it came up, like on talk shows and stuff, because, the reason it's come up is that I do a lot of one-on-one with people who have been recently diagnosed, that you've got rheumatoid arthritis, and people immediately see themselves in wheelchairs. They just go sigh. That your lifestyle, that if you, the thing I have learned, from an individual point of view of, this would go almost back to basic growth patterns from childhood on up, is that if you want to do something bad enough, that nothing . . . you know, as long as you've got everything controlled and in order and thought out, that you shouldn't make excuses up for something to prevent you from doing whatever it is that you want to do. If you want to be president of the United States, as long as you've got it controlled and your, everything else that's part of your life is taken care of and put into little capsules and is all organized, that you can do that. The questions I get so often, you know, because I keep long, long hours, I chose, as a female---these were several things---I was making right at 23-24 thousand dollars a year four and a half years ago, of combined a head



consulting job and a full-time job doing fund-raising for the Girl Scout organization. And chose to give that up, all within the first three months that I was on the Council. And only for one reason: it made me, created two different sets of feelings in me. I was very angry because I had worked very hard to get to that point, where I felt, you know, that my time was being reimbursed at a level where I could see some money, you know apart from just having to go out. And it had taken a lot of just personal sacrifices to get to that point, and I thought, "Well, this is what it's all about. I'll be able to . . . you've only got 'x' number of years to work that you're really productive and I like to make the money and set it aside and do some stuff with it later on." And I found out that when I went on the Council, that, as a female, since I was the only one, replacing Gwen, who'd been the only one, that immediately I became besieged with speaking requests, attendance at meetings, that it was just absolutely expected by everybody that I would be everywhere. And I wasn't prepared for that at all. I was prepared to deal with, like one of the guys did. Because they didn't have to give up, there's not a one of them that had to give up their job. They have full time jobs. There are three that retired after years of being with their own company, but they chose to retire, before they even got on the City Council. And I felt almost betrayed, you know, why me? Why am I the one that's got to give up my own career in order to do that? But what was happening was, it was just the thing that was just the thing that was just normally accepted by people is that, a speaking engagement, they'd want the male point of view and the female point of view. There wasn't any big diabolical plot, just you know, she's going to be different. I could have said, very easily, said, "Hey, I'm not going to do it. I'm going to



keep my own career. I feel that earning the money is very important for me individually and I don't want to lose the time of having additional income come in." And I wrestled with that one. Clair and I talked about it for days on end because I was walking around with deep circles under my eyes, trying to do two things, trying to perform what I was being paid to do, and then also do all the political stuff that was being required. So, as well-organized as I thought I had been, because I've always done a lot of volunteer work and always worked full-time, there was just not enough time in the course of the day to do it, and then to come home and to be wife, mother, and every thing else here at the house. So I finally said, you know, which is, got down to the point that I got wrapped up in, is that. Sure, I could make that choice, and I could say, "Folks, take a flying leap, you know. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to continue to work." But the thing that was constantly getting in there is that, as a female, as the only female elected in the city political structure at the time, that it would also reflect upon women in general. And you can just get all caught up in that whole thing, not that you . . . I've never chosen and never will choose to speak for women, because I . . . everybody's again got their own, totally separate opinion. But it was so intertwined that that kept clouding my whole process of deciding what to do. And I finally decided to just go ahead, that I would just give up all outside work completely. I am listed on our stationery as vice president of our company, but that's just . . . I mean, practically name only. But it's done for a very good reason. It was interesting that when I had a title, two titles at the time, that I was being addressed and introduced as "so-and-so, who is . . ." and here's your title, et cetera, and you're perceived as part of the business type struc-



ture. And then immediately, when I chose to give up all my outside income and sever relationships with that, I then became introduced for the first time and I almost sat down and walked out (inaudible) said, "Forget this!" And that's when, for purposes on stationery, I became vice-president of our company. But that was, you know, again, it wasn't that, I'm not insulted. I---well, I was, in a way---but I just felt that that was . . . they don't introduce Tom Todd, even though he's retired, and was retired as "house man", or unemployed, or anything like that, you know, or Bob James, or Andy, those three who happen to be retired, and why, all of a sudden, would I be no longer perceived as somebody who had been involved in the business world, and then from one day to the next, down to just a stereotype. And that's why I joined the company, from that standpoint.

McKAY: Do I have time for one final question?

VANDER SCHAAF: Sure, yeah, I'm in no hurry.

McKAY: Do you find that there's some confusion with the fact that you and your husband have names that could belong to a person of either sex?

VANDER SCHAAF: It's really been confusing. And there've been so many funny stories about things that occurred. Clair loves it. He thinks it has helped him politically, from the standpoint of just running for office. The thing that has been brought up different times is that we really can't lose. If people have a particular bias about male or female, they get so confused with the Pat-Clair situation that when they go in there, particularly at voting time, they're really not sure. I'll give you a classic example of what happened last time.

When Clair ran for his position when he was a County Court Squire, when Bill Farris had resigned, we had this friend of ours. It was election night and everybody was all excited. The returns were coming in. And this friend of ours that lived over in Bartlett called, and she was just hysterical. She said, "I have got to tell you the funniest story of what just happened to me." And she proceeded, and she said, "My neighbor across the street is very, very into the feminist movement, just so pro-women, period, that if Genghis Khan were a female and ran for office, she'd vote for her just for that very reason." And the woman had come in, ran over to Mary's house, she said, screaming, "She won! She won! My candidate won!" Mary said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Clair Vander Schaff just won the County Court. She'll be the first woman, et cetera. Not the first woman, but she's replacing a female going out." And Mary Alexander just cracked up. She said, "First woman? That's Pat's husband! That's Clair you just voted for!" But I mean, there were, there are so many funny things. And then the same thing with my name. I've been, there have been people think that it's Patrick. And if they've got any bias about a female sometimes it may work out more times than we think of, of being particularly advantageous.



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